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## zinc borate (Firebreak ZB) EPA Pesticide Fact Sheet 10/91

AMENDED VERSION: 10/1/91

EPA Pesticide Fact Sheet

Name of Chemical: Zinc Borate ( $2\text{ZnO} \cdot 3\text{B}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot 3.5\text{H}_2\text{O}$ )  
Reason for Issuance: New Chemical Registration (AMENDED VERSION)  
Date Issued: 7/15/91  
Fact Sheet Number: 225.1

### 1. DESCRIPTION

- Generic Names: Zinc Borate ( $2\text{ZnO} \cdot 3\text{B}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot 3.5\text{H}_2\text{O}$ )
- Trade Name: Firebrake ZB
- EPA Shaughnessy Code: 128859
- Year of Initial Registration: 1991
- Pesticide Type: Fungicide
- U.S. and Foreign Producers: U.S. Borax & Chemical Corp.  
3075-Wilshire Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90010

### 2. USE PATTERNS AND FORMULATIONS

Application sites: Interior uses, such as PVC carpet backing, shower curtains, wall coverings, etc., and exterior uses, such as PVC tenting and awnings, polyolefin wire and cable coverings, etc.

Type of formulation: 100 manufacturing grade formulation.

Types and methods of application: Granular product can be fed into an extruder, calender machine, or injection molding machine for plastics or incorporated during pigment dispersion cycle for coatings.

Application rates: The effective additive level varies depending on fungal susceptibility of the product and ultimate conditions for the use of the product. For protection of plastics, a rate range of 3-30 parts product per hundred parts resin is used. For coatings, rates range from 1.25 to 3.0 lb/gal.

### 3. SCIENCE FINDINGS

#### Summary Science Statement

The toxicological data submitted for this active ingredient included the full complement of acute studies. Results of these studies show that zinc borate is in the toxicity category III (CAUTION) based on acute dermal and primary eye irritation studies with rabbits.

Zinc borate did not induce either genotoxic effects or chromosomal aberrations in mutagenicity studies.

Environmental fate data were waived because there is no direct or indirect discharge resulting from production of this chemical.

#### Chemical Characteristics

Color: White  
Physical State: Granular  
Melting Point: Greater than 550 degrees C  
Particle Size: 8-20 um (mean)  
Density: 40 to 50 lbs/cu. ft. (bulk)  
pH: 7.6 (In deionized H2O)

#### Toxicological Characteristics

##### Acute effects:

1. Acute Oral (LD50) in Rats - The LD50 in rats (males) was found to be greater than 10 g/kg. Zinc borate did not produce severe signs of toxicity in treated rats.
2. Acute Dermal Toxicity (LD50) in Rabbits - The LD50 was estimated to be greater than 10 g/kg in both male and female albino rabbits.
3. Primary Eye Irritation in Albino Rabbits - Zinc borate was shown to be an eye irritant producing mild conjunctivitis in albino rabbits.
4. Primary Dermal Irritation/Corrosivity in Albino Rabbits - The Primary Irritation Index of zinc borate in rabbits was found to be 0. Therefore, it is not considered to be an irritant or corrosive.

Data from acute oral and acute dermal toxicity tests place the chemical in Toxicity Categories IV and III, respectively. These results were duplicated in the primary eye and primary dermal irritation studies. In a dermal sensitization study involving guinea pigs, zinc borate showed no evidence of adverse dermal effects. Precautionary labeling language as follows is required for this product:

"Avoid skin and eye contact. Avoid inhalation. Wash after handling."

##### Mutagenic effects:

In the Salmonella/microsomal Assay (Ames Bioassay) for bacterial mutagenic activity, zinc borate did not elicit any mutagenic response in Salmonella tester strains when tested either with or without a metabolic activation system.

#### Environmental Fate

The Agency reviewed available data on fate and transport of zinc and boron in the environment and concluded that no additional data were warranted for the proposed pesticidal use. The following were among factors contributing to this position:

1. According to the registrant, there is no direct or indirect discharge of zinc borate into the environment from manufacturing this chemical.
2. The water solubility for zinc borate at 23 degrees C (average temperature

- under natural conditions) is very low (0.1 at pH 5 and 7, and 0.03 at pH 9). The zinc borate will be incorporated into some synthetic matrix to act as an antifungal agent. To be effective over time, the chemical must not have a propensity to solubilize and leach out of the matrix. Any movement of the chemical out of the matrix will either be by abrasion (wear) or leaching as solubilized ions. Therefore it is highly unlikely that large amounts of the chemical will get into the environment through its pesticidal use. Leaching studies are being required to confirm that ion levels in the leachate would be of no toxicological concern.
- When reformulated into other products where it serves as a fire retardant and fungicide, i.e. in PVC products, ceramics, other chemicals, cosmetics, etc., zinc borate becomes chemically incorporated into the finished products and loses its identity.
1. The chemical reactions of zinc borate can form a composite of oxides of zinc and boron. Both these chemicals occur naturally in soil and are essential micronutrients for plants. Moreover, both zinc and boron are used extensively in agriculture as soil amendments to improve the vigor of plants. As soil amendments these chemicals are applied at levels substantially higher than would be anticipated from their use in plastics as a fungicide. The Agency is unaware of any lasting adverse effects on the environment from the soil amendment uses of zinc and boron. The Agency concluded that additional data requirements would not add any substantive information to the available scientific data base.

Based on these facts, the registrant was granted a waiver from all environmental fate data requirements including hydrolysis data.

#### Ecological Characteristics

In avian dietary studies, the LC50 value of zinc borate in the mallard ducklings (*Anas platyrhynchos*) is estimated to be greater than 5,620 ppm. No mortality occurred in either the control or treated groups. A slight reduction in body weight was observed at the 6,520 ppm concentration during the exposure period. There was no effect on feed consumption at any concentration tested.

The acute toxicity of zinc borate to bluegill sunfish (*Lepomis macrochirus*) was tested under static conditions at mean concentrations of 94, 137, 182, 248, and 335 ppm. The 96hr LC50 for bluegill sunfish was shown to be greater than 335 ppm. These results indicate that zinc borate is practically nontoxic to the fish species tested.

#### Benefits

Potential advantages to the general public appear to exist by having Firebrake ZB available as a fungicide in view of the following:

- Zinc borate has a relatively low toxicity with no demonstrated adverse public health effects following extensive long-term use as a fire retardant in applications including carpet backing, fabric coating, wall covering, urethane foam, roofing PVC tenting and awnings, etc.
- Zinc borate is a broad-spectrum fungicide with no demonstrated adverse environmental effects. This chemical would provide protection of a variety of plastic products and may decrease the environmental burden of more toxic pesticides by acting as an alternative for protection of plastics.

## Tolerance Assessment

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There are no proposed direct food or feed uses of zinc borate, therefore, EPA has not established tolerances or exemptions from tolerances in raw agricultural commodities or processed food and feed products under the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act (FFDCA).

### 4. SUMMARY OF MAJOR DATA GAPS

A leachability study is being required as a condition of registration. This study must be submitted within nine (9) months of registration approval of Firebrake ZB

### Expiration Date

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Conditional registration of Firebrake ZB will expire on July 31, 1992.

### 5. CONTACT PERSON AT EPA

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